

ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION
4141 N. Third Street, Phoenix AZ 85012
Thursday – July 9, 2009

M I N U T E S

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Yamanouchi.

Present

Advisory Commissioners

Kenneth Yamanouchi, Chairman
Linda Fulkerson, Vice Chairwoman
Gary Fredricks
Bill Lunsford
Terrie Gent
George Cushing

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Robert Barnes, Deputy Director
Dave Hampton, Public Information Officer
Tom Creager, AZ State Veteran Home
Administrator
Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director, AZ
State Veteran Home
Lee Borgen, Veterans' Benefits Counselor

Absent

Larry McKim

Guests

none

Opening – Chairman Yamanouchi opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. with appropriate ceremony.

1. Chairman Yamanouchi stated that although the Governor has not made the appointments for the new Commission year, Commissioner Fredricks shall continue to serve as a Commissioner until notified otherwise. This is based on an e-mail from Director Strickland dated July 8, 2009 that forwarded an e-mail from Linda Stiles in the Governor's office, of the same date, stating that the nominations are on the Governor's desk and that prior members continue to serve until replaced.

2. Chairman Yamanouchi commented on the diverse responsibilities and challenges faced by a Commission Chairman and the benefit of continuity of leadership to sustain ongoing efforts in support of the Commissions established goals and objectives. A discussion ensued on the pros and cons of single or successive terms for the office of Chairman. The consensus was that the Commission will continue to choose a new Chairman annually in accordance with their current guidelines as previously approved by the Commission membership.

Election of New Chairperson:

1. Chairman Yamanouchi called for nominations for the office of Chairperson.
 - Vice Chairwoman Fulkerson was nominated by Commissioner Cushing, seconded by Commissioner Gent. There being no further nomination proposed, Chairman Yamanouchi called for the vote by a show of hands. Vice Chairwoman Fulkerson was unanimously elected Chairperson.
2. Chairman Yamanouchi called for nomination for the office of Vice Chairperson.
 - Commissioner Cushing nominated Commissioner Fredricks, seconded by Chairperson-elect Fulkerson. There being no further nominations proposed, Chairman Yamanouchi called for the vote by a show of hands. Commissioner Fredricks was unanimously elected Vice Chairperson.
3. Chairwoman-elect Fulkerson assumed the Chair with congratulations from the Commissioners.

Minutes – The minutes of June 11, 2009 were approved as distributed. Moved by Commissioner Cushing and seconded by Commissioner Yamanouchi.

Communications – none

Agency Announcements:

1. Deputy Director Barnes:

- Offered congratulations to Chairwoman Fulkerson on her election.
- Introduced Mr. Homer Rodgers who has been hired to be the Assistant Deputy Director in charge of the State Veteran Home and major construction. He comes with impressive credentials and will be a great asset to the Phoenix Veteran Home and the development of the Veteran Home in Tucson.
- The Woman Veterans' conference of June 26-27, 2009 was a success. The meetings were well attended and content was good. The Department has work to do on the venue and will be reviewing the "lessons learned." The Department is already looking forward to next year's event.
- The budget was signed. The Agency took a reduction, as did all agencies, but was given the flexibility to determine how the reduction was distributed. There were no cuts in current services offered by the Agency.
- Expressed appreciation for the support of the veterans' service organizations while budget negotiations were underway.
- Thanked the Commissioners for their staunch support in putting the legislature on notice that veterans are watching their proceedings with great interest.
- Advised that between himself and the Director, they attended this year's State Conventions of most of the veteran service organizations in the State.
- Announced that Arizona is host to the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention that will be held in August at the Convention Center.
- The Tucson State Veteran Home is still a work in progress. The State's 10 million was in the budget. Mr. Rodgers will get the process started to develop the architectural design for the Tucson Home.
- The Directors' office spaces at 3839 North 3rd Street are being reorganized. There will be a large conference room available for the Commission to use. The Director would like the Commission to consider relocating their meetings to 3839 North 3rd Street. The conference room should be ready in time for the August meeting.

Commissioner Yamanouchi asked if former Commissioner Sigholtz's picture may be moved to the new conference room as he holds a special place in the collective heart of the Commission. Administrator Creager said told the Commissioners that the picture will be moved to the new conference room.

Commissioner Gent asked about the status of the funds for the Southern Arizona Memorial Cemetery. Deputy Director Barnes said that the Southern Arizona Memorial Cemetery Fund has not been touched.

Vice Chair Fredricks asked about funding for other State cemeteries. Deputy Director Barnes advised that notification of intent to request authority for State cemeteries in northern Arizona have been submitted to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA). A cemetery on the Navajo reservation will technically not be a State cemetery. It will be a Nation cemetery and its development will be between the Navajo Nation and the VA. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services may provide assistance as requested.

- Passed out copies of the new "Arizona Veterans Information Directory" and "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents" 2009 edition.

2. Administrator Creager advised:

- Construction on the new dining rooms will commence next week and should be completed by December.

- Prior to May this year, veterans rated 70% or more service connected were not eligible to reside in a State Veteran Home. In May the rules changed last May and he is working with the VA to develop guidelines for the administration of these veterans as residents in the Home.
- The Home now has a speaker's bureau to do outreach; they give presentations to groups and organizations letting them know about the Home and the services available.
- The current resident census is 158.

3. Dave Hampton provided a written summary of the latest legislative actions and gave a brief overview of pertinent bills.

Vice Chair Fredricks asked if the Agency is still involved in verifying veteran organization authenticity. Mr. Hampton advised that it is in statute that organizations wanting to raise money in the name of veterans have to register with ADVS. The problem is that there are no guidelines for evaluating entities nor is there any provision for enforcement.

Commissioner Yamanouchi asked for the status of getting authority for credit card donations to the Arizona Veteran Donation Fund. Gabe Forsberg advised that she has researched the issue and it is a very complicated process. Setup and management requires multiple agency involvement including ongoing support. There are also fees involved with the use of credit cards that have to be paid by the donor or taken out of each donation. Setting up credit card donation capability is not something that this Agency may arbitrarily institute.

Region 1 meeting in Chandler 9/26/09: Commissioner Cushing advised:

- Preparations for the region meeting, in conjunction with Chandler's veterans' expo, are on track.
- American Legion Post 35 is hosting the event that will run from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The town-hall meeting will probably be held from 10:00 to noon.
- The Mayor's office is handling media, advertising and dignitary invitations.

A brief discussion ensued on how best to work administratively within this new venue.

Region Assignments for new Commissioners: Chairwoman Fulkerson deferred this issue because the designation of the new Commissioners is still pending.

Commission Meeting Calendar, 2009-2010: Chairwoman Fulkerson:

- Entertained a discussion on how to schedule the region meetings most efficiently.
- Asked the Commissioners to research their respective territories for the best meeting locations and project meeting dates for the year ahead.
- Asked Commissioner Yamanouchi if he would cover Phillip Quochytewa and Tom Heaney's region until the new Commissioners are assigned.

Constituent Issues Tracking: Chairwoman Fulkerson deferred this item due to Commissioner McKim's absence.

Open Discussion / For the Good of the Order:

1. Vice Chair Fredricks thanked Commissioner Yamanouchi for his leadership and hard work as Chairman.
2. Commissioner Gent:
 - Thanked the Department for the excellent Military Women's Conference.
 - She was impressed by the women who attended and also venter participation. Women from WW II through Afghanistan participated and shared of themselves. She also noted that some of the venders were women veterans.
 - The memorial service for the 123 women who made the ultimate sacrifice was especially impressive.

3. Chairwoman Fulkerson agreed that the memorial service was very moving.

Adjournment – Chairwoman Fulkerson adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m. (Moved by Commissioner Cushman and seconded by Vice Chairman Fredricks.) The next meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on August 13, 2009 at the Arizona State Veteran Home, 4141 North Third Street, Phoenix Arizona unless notified of a change of location.

Respectfully submitted,

S. Lee Borgen
Secretary